Escalante Massacre Basics

When
September 20 1985
A day before Marcos Sr was going to celebrate the declaration of Martial Law

Where
Escalante Public Plaza, Negros.
50 meters across the town hall.

What happened
Thousands of sugar workers, farmers, fisherfolk, students, urban poor, professionals and church people, carrying placards, some bamboo sticks, and chanting anti-government slogans staged a protest in commemoration of the 13th anniversary of martial law.

50 combat-ready Regional Special Action Forces (RSAF), plus local policemen, members of the Civilian Home Defense Force (CHDF), and unidentified armed civilians surrounded protesters.

After the town mayor Braulio Lumayno, with former congressman Armando Gustilo leaves the cityhall, the armed men fired on protesters.

It is believed to be the worst protest violence under Marcos' 20-year rule. The soldiers said they fired only after they were attacked by the demonstrators.

The dead were shot either in the back or the side, indicating they were fired at while fleeing, the Escalante fact-finding Committee, a joint military and civilian body, said in its report.

How many were killed
The shooting claimed 20 lives – their bodies found sprawled at the rally site and in nearby sugarcane fields. Thirty others lay wounded. A bank, concrete walls, and some houses in front of the town hall had bullet holes.

Who was responsible

- Fact-finding committee recommended Saturday that a mayor and 45 soldiers be charged
- The committee recommended the filing of ″multiple murder″ and ″multiple attempted murder″ charges against Escalante Mayor Braulio Lumayno, town police chief Capt. Rafael Jugan, constabulary Capt. Modesto Sanson Jr., who commanded the troops in the incident, and 43 of their men.
- The committee found that the security forces, many armed with rifles, fired on ″defenseless victims″ after failing to disperse them with water hoses and tear gas bombs.
- ″Intent to kill is unequivocally shown by the nature of the wounds inflicted and the use of firearms to inflict the same,″ the report said.
- The committee held Mayor Lumayno accountable because the police involved in the incident were his men. It also cited testimony by a witness that Lumayno helped direct operations against the demonstrators.